

Claims

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1. A method of preparing an orange juice product, comprising the steps of:

harvesting a mid-season round orange cultivar selected from the group consisting of a Verna cultivar, a Frost cultivar, or a combination of these mid-season cultivars, said harvesting step providing said mid-season orange cultivar which has its peak properties during a time period after the peak harvesting season for early-to-mid season round orange fruit, including Hamlin orange fruit, and before the peak harvesting season for late season round orange fruit including Hughes Valencia and Rhode Red Valencia orange fruit, each peak harvesting season being within the growing territory of the harvesting step;

extracting juice from a volume of said mid-season round oranges of said harvesting step;

collecting the resulting extracted orange juice as a mid-season orange juice having a Brix-to-acid ratio (BAR) during said harvesting step which is greater than that of either early-to-mid season round orange fruit or late season round orange fruit harvested within the time period of said harvesting step; and

blending said collected mid-season orange juice with another orange juice source in order to provide a juice composition having a greater BAR value than and sensory qualities equivalent or superior to the sensory qualities of orange juice from either said

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~~early-to-mid season round orange fruit juice or said late season orange fruit harvested during said harvesting season.~~

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said harvesting step occurs in December to February in the northern hemisphere.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step blends early-to-mid season juice or late season juice harvested during said harvest season as the another orange juice source.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step blends a stored orange juice as the another orange juice source.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step incorporates up to about 80 volume percent of said extracted orange juice.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having overall quality sensory scores greater than those of Hamlin, Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia juices from orange fruit harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory green character which is less than that of Hughes

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Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.

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8. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory bitterness character which is less than that of Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory feeling factors character which is less than that of Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory sourness character which is less than that of Hughes Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory other citrus notes character which is less than that of Rhode Red Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
12. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory packaged notes character which is less than that of

5 Pineapple cultivar orange juice harvested at the time
of said harvesting step.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step
provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory
total orange character which is greater than that of
Hughes Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of
5 said harvesting step.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step
provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory raw
orange character which is greater than that of
Pineapple cultivar orange juice harvested at the time
5 of said harvesting step.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step
provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory
sweet character which is greater than that of Hughes
Valencia, Rhode Red Valencia or Pineapple cultivar
orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting
5 step.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting step
provides mid-season orange juice having a Color
Number of at least 1 CN greater than Hamlin orange
juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting step
provides mid-season orange juice having a Color
Number of at least 2 CN greater than Hamlin orange
juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein said harvesting step harvests Vernia cultivars, and said collecting step provides mid-season orange juice having a Color Number of at least 1 CN greater than Hughes Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.

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19. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting step provides a juice having a Brix-to-acid ratio (BAR) during the months of December to February in the northern hemisphere which meets or exceeds the Orange Fruit Maturity Standards of the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

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20. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting step provides a juice having an acid value which is less than the acid value of juice harvested from said late season round orange fruit during the months of December to February in the northern hemisphere.

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Sub A1 21. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting provides an orange juice source having a Color Number of at least 36 CN units; and said blending blends at least about 5 volume percent, based on the volume of the orange juice, of said juice from the extracting step with said another orange juice source in order to provide an orange juice product having a Color Number in excess of 36 CN units.

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22. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides a not from concentrate orange juice.

sub A2 23. A method of preparing an orange juice product, comprising the steps of:

5 harvesting Vernia cultivars which have neither peak properties during a time period after the peak harvesting season for early-to-mid season round orange fruit, including Hamlin orange fruit, and before the peak harvesting season for late season round orange fruit including Hughes Valencia and Rhode Red Valencia orange fruit, each peak harvesting season being within the growing territory of the 10 harvesting step;

extracting juice from a volume of said Vernia round oranges of said harvesting step;

15 collecting the resulting extracted orange juice as a mid-season orange juice having a Brix-to-acid ratio (BAR) during said harvesting step which is greater than that of either said early-to-mid season round orange fruit or said late season round orange fruit harvested within the time period of said 20 harvesting step; and

25 blending said collected mid-season orange juice with another orange juice source in order to provide a juice composition having a greater BAR value than and sensory qualities equivalent or superior to the sensory qualities of orange juice from either said early-to-mid season round orange fruit juice or said late season orange fruit harvested during said harvesting season.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein said blending step incorporates up to about 80 volume percent of said extracted orange juice.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having overall quality sensory scores greater than those of Hamlin, Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia juices from orange fruit harvested at the time of said harvesting step.

sub A3> 26. The method of claim 23, wherein said collecting provides an orange juice source having a Color Number of at least 36 CN units; and said blending blends at least about 5 volume percent, based on the volume of the orange juice, of said juice from the extracting step with said another orange juice source in order to provide an orange juice product having a Color Number in excess of 36 CN units.

27. The method of claim 23, wherein said blending step provides a not from concentrate orange juice.

sub B5> 28. An orange juice composition comprising a blend of: up to about 99 volume percent of a mid-season orange juice supply, based upon the total volume of the composition, said mid-season juice having a sensory profile equivalent or superior to that of 100 percent Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia orange

sub P5 > juice from fruit harvested at about the same time as
fruit from which said mid-season juice originates;

10 at least about 1 percent by volume of an orange
juice supply other than said mid-season orange juice
supply, based upon the total volume of the
composition; and

15 said fruit from which the mid-season fresh orange
juice originates is a round orange cultivar selected
from Vernia cultivars, Frost cultivars, or a
combination of these mid-season cultivars.

29. The composition of claim 28, wherein said very early
season juice comprises up to about 80 percent by
volume of the composition, based upon the total
volume of the composition.

30. The composition of claim 28, wherein said mid-season
cultivar is a Vernia round orange cultivar.